

America: The Architectural Melting Pot

Chapels in England and Meetinghouses in America

Before leaving the shores of England, we must mention the activities and form of worship of those who came to be referred to as the “nonconformists”. The Anglican Church, once again, controlled the worship in England during the reign of Charles II and with the imposition of the Act of Uniformity in 1662, both of which had the effect of bringing Archbishop Laud back from the dead. Those who refused to worship as an Anglican were dissentersⁱ and, by law, illegal. They had to worship in secret and ran the risk of arrest, imprisonmentⁱⁱ, persecution or even execution. Things remained contentious but attitudes became much more civil with the passing of the Act of Toleration only twenty-seven years laterⁱⁱⁱ. This allowed nonconformists to worship on their own, mostly suffering now only from a social stigma.

As a result, many dissenters began converting existing buildings or constructing new ones which would provide them places of worship on their own. As John Piper^{iv} wrote, these buildings were not just plain and simple, they were aggressive statements against the sacerdotal practices and requirements of the state church. Drummond recognizes this: “Carlyle spoke of the Puritan Movement as ‘the struggle of men intent on the essence of things against men intent on the semblances and forms of things. ... [It] is not the thing I praise in the Puritans, it is the thing I pity.’ (*Lectures On Heroes*)” (Drummond, p. 41) Still, he respectfully begs to differ in his own estimation of Puritan motivation.

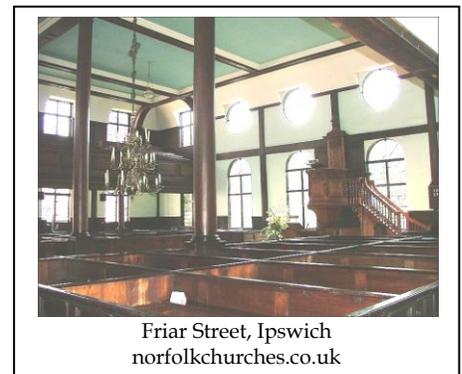
The Nonconformists of the 18th century had no traditions to fall back upon in church architecture. They built in the usual fashion of their day. If they had been rich enough, there is no reason to doubt that they would have been willing to employ Wren, Hawksmoor, or Gibbs, and would have accepted similar buildings to those erected for the State Church, with modifications as to the chancel plan. (p. 43)

They even rejected the name “church”, preferring the title “chapel” instead and rejected all other symbolism by which they might otherwise be identified with Anglicanism^v.

The dissenters collected into several identifiable groupings – Unitarians, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, even Quakers by this time, and later, Methodists^{vi}. Yet for their doctrinal distinctives, which could be quite distinctive indeed, the houses of worship were commonly plain and simple. And this was true whether the people who built and worshipped there were wealthy or poor. The house might be made by primitive effort or be constructed with rich wood and expertise. Nevertheless, their building was their message to the Crown.

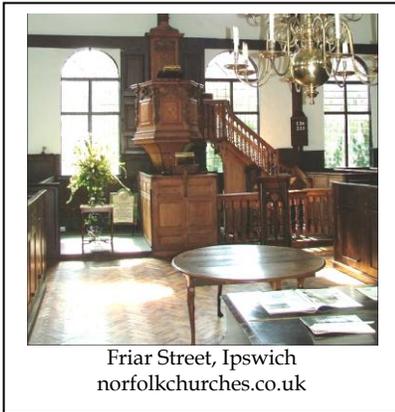
These English Chapels were almost all built in the same rectangular style we studied of in Scotland, with only a few being designed in a square pattern. Always the pulpit was centered before the congregation and almost always, the pulpit was fixed against the center of the long wall.^{vii}

There were not just a few such meetinghouses. In the late 17th century and on into the middle of the 18th, such places of worship were more plentiful than even the state-sanctioned churches that so often visibly characterized the center of towns. While the Church was handsomely built, usually large and accommodating, and located in the center of the



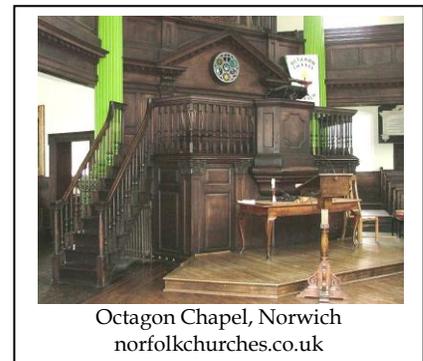
green, nonconformist chapels were erected in almost every side street, back alley and open area on the edge of town.^{viii}

Two that still stand and, indeed, are even in use as chapels today, had



Presbyterian influence and beginnings. In 1700, the chapel on Friar Street in Ipswich was built. The raised pulpit is centered against the long wall surrounded by boxed-in pews. There is a large open area in front of the pulpit that can only suggest how the large, original communion table might have looked and where it stood and what the pattern

for observing that sacrament was, or, for that matter, how baptisms were performed. The other is the Octagon Chapel in Norwich, built in 1756. While the present building demonstrates careful attention to restoration and is quite handsome, We note, particularly, the raised pulpit and the platform in front of it. If that platform is original, it would suggest a good size table sitting upon it.



This similarity of area in front of the pulpit is important because it communicates a balance in the thinking of the builders between the centrality of the Word preached and the proper exercise of the sacraments. That balance will not necessarily carry over when the English chapel transfers over to the American Meetinghouse.

The 17th c. pilgrimages to the New World were almost specifically by the imposition and intolerance of the English crown and his Anglican Church toward

dissenters. The “Puritans” had wanted to reform the church from within, but the Independents and Presbyterians wanted nothing to do with her. So, at the same time the nonconformist chapels were being built in England, meeting houses began to be raised as part of the enterprise that was growing there.

Perhaps as many as forty houses of worship were either intended or actually constructed in New England between 1630-1642^{ix}, being designated and intended to be built right in the various charters of agreement that had been drawn up earlier. As one might expect, such plans were for the construction of meeting houses, not churches^x, which indicated that any residue of Anglicanism was deliberately left behind.

In what had become known in France and Holland as the “Protestant Plain Style”, these American meeting houses were built in much the same style and design as those left behind in England. They were mostly rectangular with the pulpit against the long wall and with pews wrapped around the proclamation of the Word. Some would have galleries built into the short walls and any and all stairways to access both those galleries as well as the high pulpit were built on to the exterior of the building to save interior space.

One noticeable difference clearly seems to emerge. The meeting houses in New England were required to be all-purpose, civic buildings. They were not begun or constructed by any one group of dissenters as opposed to another, they were typically built by and for the entire community. This yielded two very predictable outcomes. The first was that the American meeting houses had to be slightly adjusted in order to accommodate other types of gatherings and meetings than just the Lord’s Day services.

The second was that the preaching and doctrine proclaimed from the pulpit had to be agreed upon by the entire community rather than to one specific viewpoint or belief.

The only 17th c. meeting house left standing today is the Old Ship Meeting House in Hingham, MA^{xi}. Built in 1681, it replaced an even older structure and was instigated by the vision of the Rev. Peter Hobart who died in 1679, two years before the new edifice could be built. But the new construction project had a contentious beginning because it was to be built and operated as a civic enterprise – all the townspeople were pressed into funding and physically constructing the building – and there simply had to be sufficient agreement. Pastor Hobart had been schooled at the University of

Cambridge in the days when it was controlled by the Puritans, so the meeting house must have had a fairly conservative, theological beginning^{xii}. Bringing the community together on its own terms probably meant that social conciliation became the one creed by which the meeting house would stand or fall. That sense of



Old Ship, Hingham, MA, 1681
Wikipedia.org

democracy may very well be the reason why the congregation eventually slipped into a Unitarian form of faith^{xiii} that, today, actively advocates tolerance and inclusiveness^{xiv}.

Such doctrinal and pragmatic influences as this meeting house was built to characterize would not have objected to keeping the pulpit center stage. (After all, what is preached from that pulpit can be controlled.) What is more telling is the de-emphasis on the sacraments, particularly the Lord's Supper^{xv}. There was a small, almost

imperceptible adjustment made to the form of the table that truly speaks volumes – it is typically petite, curved gracefully on the ends, and folds down on hinges from the pulpit wall when it is not needed. It is utilitarian and universal^{xvi}. Sitting just below the pulpit was the enclosed elder’s pew which faced the congregation. It would appear that



the institution of the Lord’s Supper was done from there.

The Lord’s Supper was frequently celebrated monthly among Congregationalists and quarterly among Presbyterians. In New England it seems likely that it was received in the pews, the bread and wine being passed to the people in the pews by the deacons. In the words of John Cotton, “Ceremonies wee use none” and this simplicity was reflected in the small plain tables, sometimes just a leaf was hinged on the elder’s pew. Thus

the elder could sit behind the table and face the congregation across it at sacramental time. (White, p. 106-07)

The table was made to appear intentionally insignificant. This had a pragmatic purpose - to avoid taking up critical floor space - but also to signify a rejection of anything that smacked of Roman Catholicism. It appears to be an American innovation that catches on eagerly and carries through the 18th c meeting houses as well.

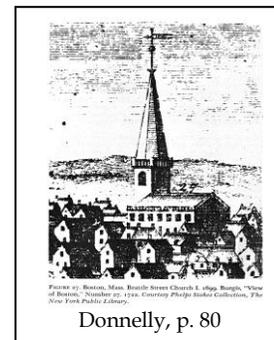
Whereas the preaching of the Word was becoming more and more the singular, identifying mark of the Protestant faith in the United States, thoughts regarding the practice of the sacraments continued to be held in dispute.

Already in 1657 the Half-Way Covenant had made possible the baptism of children whose baptized parents were not yet church members. ... Not only were the clergy unable to enforce the original Puritan standards of conduct, they were also unable to maintain political control. (Donnelly, p. 64.)

That same Half-Way Covenant would cause the storm of controversy in Northampton, MA in 1749 when Jonathan Edwards began refusing communion even to members of good standing in his own congregation.

Meanwhile, other adaptations were also being made which, in effect, did not deny the principled issues of the past, perhaps, as much as simply forgetting about them. In 1698, Boston already had three Congregational churches and Thomas Brattle gave land and designed the building for yet a fourth. He, alone, had a statement to make. This new house of worship was to be an emblem of his desire to purposely step away from Puritan, Calvinistic principles. Therefore, the “meeting house” was to have

a “main entrance in the bell tower (while retaining a secondary entrance on the long side) and ...[a] pulpit at the opposite end ...[and] rounded or compass windows.” (Sweeney, pp. 59ff). The pulpit was to be fixed to the far, short wall, opposite the main entrance. Even more radical than this, the Brattle Street Meeting



House came complete with the first tower and spire; and it was not going to be called a meeting house but a church.

The first meeting in the Brattle Street Church was held on December 24, 1699, the sermon being preached from II Chronicles 6:18: “But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built!” It is interesting to find this choice of text, suggesting the sanctify of the building which the Puritans had denied, coinciding with the first presently known use of end tower and spire and also the first documentary mention of the building as a “church”. (Donnelly, p. 80-81)

The Brattle Street Church, in name and design, signified a growing trend in America. Before, strong theological convictions and political statements were being made which dictated the shape and layout of the worship room. Now, it was becoming

the case where the building is designed to declare the presence of less theological convictions and more politics. In fact, the worship room design and layout were already becoming rather unimportant. It was not that they were insignificant, it was simply that they were becoming inconsequential.

Wren Comes to America

The first Anglican church in America hails back to the Jamestown settlement on the shores of Virginia in 1607. At first, the English did not venture north. New England, as it is now referred to, was being first claimed by the Dutch and was originally called New Amsterdam. Instead, the Anglicans generally followed English expansion south^{xvii}. With the outcome of the American Revolution, the Anglican Church in America officially severed ties with England and became known as the Episcopal Church.^{xviii}

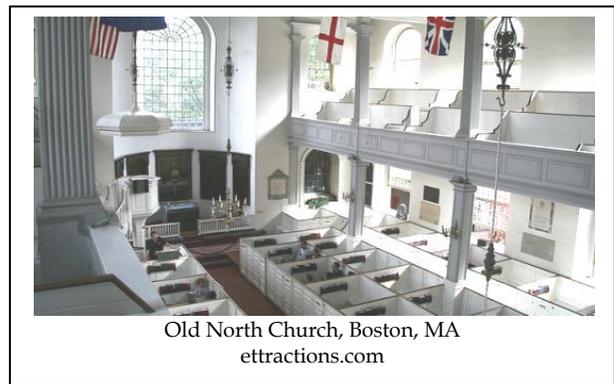
The early Anglican congregations also built and worshipped in meeting house style buildings but theirs were decidedly different on the inside^{xix}



then that of the dissenters. They were strikingly identical to the smaller churches found in England. The pulpit was still fixed on the center of the long wall, most often, but the boxed pews all faced the short wall against where the altar resided and which remained

the center of Anglican worship. The same similarities would also carry over when the Anglican Church found a home in the larger, developing cities of the new world.

Nothing illustrates this much better than the Old North Church in Boston, MA^{xx}. It might have been “Old North Church” to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow when, in 1860, he climbed the church’s spire, looked out upon the distant landscape, and became inspired to write his famous poem about Paul Revere’s ride upon seeing the two lamps being hung from the window, 195 feet in the air^{xxi}. But it was a much newer church at that historic moment which began the Revolutionary War. Old North, or Christ Church, was built in 1723 as an expansion work of King’s Chapel. Thanks to 20th century restoration of the interior, we can see the layout in its original condition.



The style of the building is Georgian, which specifically refers to the era in England between 1720-1840^{xxii}. In architectural terms, Georgian succeeded English Baroque and lasted until the Gothic Revival of the Oxford Movement. The style is characterized by strict attention to symmetry, large, rounded and elegant windows, and stylistic contributions to furniture that lend itself to the term “Colonial”. The result is a worship room that is handsome, dignified, and honoring. It should also look very familiar. It clearly has the signature of Christopher Wren via his disciple, James Gibbs by way of designer William Price. Price simply emulated what he had studied elsewhere.^{xxiii}

Wren has been called the Father of the "Colonial" church, and innumerable American churches have been mythically attributed to his genius. It would be truer to speak of him as the "Grandfather" of the Colonial church. For it was Gibbs who standardized the "City Church" by wedding the Christian spire to the pagan portico. Wren himself did not make much use of the portico. It was churches of the early 18th century, like St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, which served as models in America. This was but natural, for a simple rectangular building, with a portico at one end, and a steeple astride it, could be easily reproduced, on a large or small scale. (Drummond, p. 53)

The truth of the matter is that in the early days of Colonial America, creativity was on one of the very last ships of import. Whether the settlers were Puritan, Unitarian, Congregational, or Anglican, they simply duplicated what they had come to know back home^{xxiv}. Then, a touch of pragmatism and democracy was added, particularly by the dissenters, which altered and, in some cases, stifled some significant, conscientious principles. Eventually, self-sufficiency developed into prosperity, the expansion of wealth and ability. And, as the number of worshippers continued to seek the same house of worship, larger and larger facilities were deemed necessary. So when cities like Philadelphia and Boston were ready for grander church buildings, the designers started by wondering what the folks back home were doing.

The first period of American Architecture, which may be termed "The Age of Memory," was succeeded by an "Age of Books" (the 18th century), for there was as yet no architect in the land, and American builders were dependent on such manuals as Gibbs' Book of Architecture, Salmond's Palladio Londiniensis, etc. (Drummond, p. 52)

The results included Christ Church in 1744, and King's Chapel, the first Anglican church built in New England in 1752 respectively.

Those who were committed to their theological principles which kept them in their meeting houses would consider such expansionist temptations and ask "why?" But those with a taste for finer things, for more impressive, self-legitimizing, hopefully more influential houses of worship asked "why not?"

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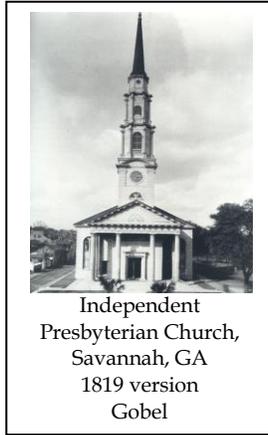
By the close of the 18th century, the meeting house, as the preferred design for promoting true worship, had retreated to smaller, isolated, more peculiar groups and all but disappeared from the American landscape. What took its place, and what was accepted and embraced by virtually every denomination of size in America, was the transplant of Gibbs' St. Martin-in-the Fields or the "City Church".

It was appealing architecture that directed the concept of worship now in a most singularly dominating way. Charles Bulfinch (1763-1844) was one of America's first professional architects and he left significant marks in Washington and Boston. He was the Wren of America in designing a host of church buildings up and down the east coast, spreading the colonial model across theological lines. Others simply followed the popular suit. Such church buildings:

. . . incorporated main trends among Congregationalist, Presbyterian, and Baptist meetinghouses in the early decades of the nineteenth century. The classical Greek and Roman elements of the exterior were borrowed from the work of earlier generations of British architects, particularly that of Christopher Wren, . . . and his pupil Nicholas Hawksmoor. . . . and by the final decade of the century, . . . Benjamin, Town and other architects were doing the same in the United States. (Kilde, p. 3)

What people became to refer to as the "church-look" was simply the rectangle box with a grand, Greek-Romanesque entrance, a long center aisle flanked by rows and rows of straight pews all facing forward to the short wall, and with either what became to be referred to as a "split-chancel" in the front or else the pulpit was placed center stage.

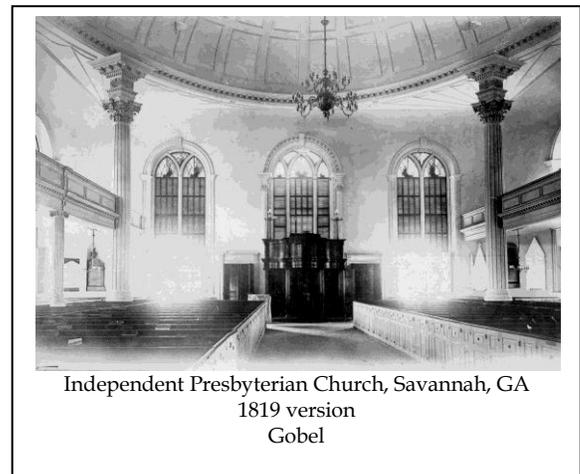
“The difference between Anglican and Non-Liturgical Church Architecture in the Colonial Period was slight” (Drummond, p. 56)



To illustrate this in just one instance, focus could be drawn to the Independent Presbyterian Church of Savannah, Georgia. This congregation harkens back to 1755 and has a clean record of maintaining a Scottish Presbyterian commitment to the Westminster Confession of Faith. The need for a new building came after a second building, built in 1800, had been destroyed by a hurricane.

Architect John Holden Green designed the new building after the First Congregational Church of Providence, Rhode Island, and it was dedicated in 1819. It was a magnificent portrayal of the classic style that had become that “church look” in America: a grand portico with columns, three front doors of which the center is the largest, with a towering church spire above. Inside, the

worship room is rectangular with the pews in straight rows all facing the front with a long, majestic aisle in between. The pulpit, a massive and distinctive one in this case, stands center stage and is immovable both physically and symbolically. There is a similarly massive



granite baptismal font that stands to the side, ready for use. It was such a beloved church building and so admired that when the 1819 building burned to the ground in

1899, architect William Preston Green was almost immediately instructed to build an exact duplicate, which still stands today.

Up north, in Connecticut, the congregation of First Church of Christ, New Haven, was building the same building at the same time (1814).

First Church was a rectangular building oriented on an east-west axis. ... Unlike earlier colonial meetinghouses, which were often oriented horizontally toward a pulpit centered on a long wall, this new, more churchly style oriented the rectangular space on the longitudinal axis, centering the main door on the short east wall and the pulpit opposite it on the west. ... The formality or "churchliness" of the Federalist exterior and interior décor, so different from the earlier unadorned meetinghouses of the Congregationalists' Puritan ancestors, pointed to the processes of evolution that would continue to shape and reshape Protestant church architecture. (Kilde, p. 5-6)

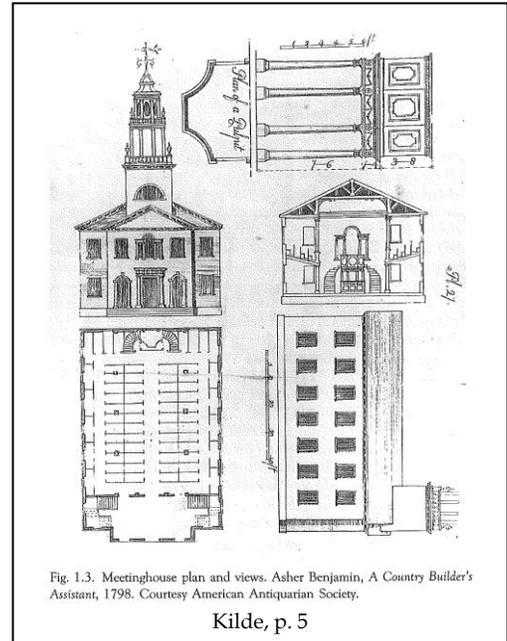


Fig. 1.3. Meetinghouse plan and views. Asher Benjamin, A Country Builder's Assistant, 1798. Courtesy American Antiquarian Society.

Kilde, p. 5

By the early part of the 19th century, the basilican design of Constantine's Rome had returned, and for many of the same reasons. Just as in Rome, there were variations and experimentations to be sure, but the natural sense, the feel, the perception of what a church *should* look like had been captured and had prevailed. Even when and wherever Colonial gave way to Gothic Revival, the interior structure did not change, and the same pressures and influences on worship would continue to be felt as the two styles struggled against each other.

Charles Finney and the Redefinition of “Church”

The First Great Awakening occurred between 1730 and 1743. It was a transatlantic phenomenon and leading figures included John Wesley, George Whitfield, and Jonathan Edwards, among others. It called upon the already church-ed to be spiritually revitalized, to examine one’s own, individual relationship with the Savior, and it called for a renewed interest in personal piety and obedience. Whitfield, particularly, had decided to side-step the church, holding forth huge assemblies often in the open air, and preaching with dramatic fervor. In many ways, it could be argued that this spiritual movement prepared the way for the American Revolution.

After the Revolutionary War was over, spiritual conviction and integrity in the new United States declined dramatically. The movement to settle the west was on, and with it a generous dispensing of newfound morals and godliness. Drunkenness, thievery, gambling and prostitution were all at new all-time highs. In the center of the country - Kentucky and the area surrounding the Cumberland Gap - illiteracy and a poverty in education followed.

These were the days of Methodist circuit-riders and pioneer evangelists who lived rough-and-tumble lives among rough-and-tumble people. One such man was a Cumberland Presbyterian minister named James McGready, who ministered in Logan County, Kentucky. He was the first to see the signs of a new revival which grew to be called the Second Great Awakening. This time, the revival spirit was much less sophisticated, controlled, sedate and within the boundaries of Christian propriety. In fact, ministers who ran what became known as “camp meetings” encouraged and

witnessed wilder and wilder demonstrations as a way of validating the effectiveness of the revival. When such camp meetings began to be held in nearby Cane Ridge, the movement was in full swing. Preaching was loud, dramatic, threatening and emotional. People responded with wild, emotional conviction and were brought to a dead-faint or involuntarily demonstrated other “exercises” meant to convey the newfound possession and power of the Holy Spirit in their lives. It was immensely popular with the sincere and the huckster alike, and revivals began to be held forth from Virginia north into New York State.

Charles Finney was nine years old when the revivals at Cane Ridge began. In his young adulthood, he began studying law in Adams, NY, and after a year and a half of that, walked away from his studies professing that he had a private conversion while walking in the woods and that the Lord had called him to now preach the gospel. He had already been attending a Presbyterian Church and so he came before the St. Lawrence presbytery to be licensed.

At his licensure exam on December 30, 1823 – after only six months of study – one presbyter asked Finney if he subscribed to the Westminster Confession of Faith. Incredibly, Finney claimed that he had not even read it! More incredibly, the presbytery licensed him anyway ... (Calhoun, vol. 1, p. 223)^{xxv}

Finney’s revival popularity soon took over as he toured through western New York State. His theology was Palagian^{xxvi} and he introduced what he legitimized as “new measures”^{xxvii} into his revival meetings in order to encourage conversions. These included using dramatic and emotional music, employing women on the platform to preach, emotionally pleading and directly praying for specific individuals, employing

the altar call, the anxious bench, and stressing the need for and reality of decisional regeneration.

After seven years, he accepted a call to the Second Free Presbyterian Church^{xxviii} in New York City. At his direction, his supporters purchased an older building, the Chatham Theatre, and Finney called it the Chatham Street Chapel. There, he was free to show forth even more innovations. “Worship” was now nothing more than a weekly evangelistic revival.

While Protestant churches to this point had favored the elevated placement of the minister in a raised pulpit indicating his authority and proximity to God relative to the assembled audience, the theatre-cum-chapel retained the prominent features of the relationship between the actor and the paying audience (Kilde p. 33)

The stage/platform was broad and unobstructed – no pulpit stood center stage^{xxix}. On that stage, Finney and others went through their “order of worship” – not a God-focused liturgy but a man-centered drama^{xxx}. The choir was placed in rows behind the platform in a way rarely seen before. Finney’s “sermons” began with the reading of a verse or two from the Bible to be followed by virtually anything Finney wished to say.

After two and a half years, Finney’s supporters began to build a new building, one that Finney also had a potent hand in designing. The result was called the Broadway Tabernacle. It was a remarkable change on two fronts. First, it



allowed Finney to continue to develop the kind of innovations in interior structure and design that he had learned of in the Theatre-turned-Chapel. Once again the stage was broad and projected out into the room^{xxxix}. The audience was seated in elegance and the curvilinear seating^{xxxix} wrapped around the elevated platform, all of which gave the room a theatrical appeal^{xxxix}. Behind the large platform stood the impressive and imposing organ pipe case, along with rows in which the members of the choir were seated, all which provided Finney an impressive backdrop^{xxxix}. “Musical performance became an important means of orchestrating audience attention. Both choral and organ performances were interspersed throughout the service^{xxxix}. The second change may or may not have been expected by Finney. His “Tabernacle” was no longer a tent. It was located on the most elite, successful and prosperous street in the city. Its appointments were fine, handsome and elegant. It had been built for and attracted the upscale in New York, the refined. As a result, it simply did not welcome the same broad spectrum of people the Chapel had. Plus, the Second Great Awakening was tiring out and the predictable, exuberant responses were slowing down dramatically. Finney’s performances became quieter and more contemplative. His individual “power” was waning. After three years in New York City, and even before the Tabernacle was completely finished, Finney accepted the offer to teach at Oberlin College in Oberlin, OH^{xxxix}.

What makes Finney important here is how excitedly he was accepted by the Christian culture of his day and how readily his methods were incorporated into the regular practices of churches across the country^{xxxix}. Even though his theology was

openly condemned as heretical by many, his zeal for conversions resonated and his immediate and superficial success at obtaining them motivated ministers everywhere to abandon their own comparatively impotent traditions almost completely and climb on to the Finney bandwagon^{xxxviii}. Liturgy was played down if not thrown out, choir lofts were placed impressively behind the pulpit and choir members began to be draped in their own gowns giving them prominent, if not official status, emotional music became standard fare and lengthy altar calls followed “hell and damnation” sermons, urging everyone to see their need to stop lying to God, repent, and believe the gospel – which often simply meant change their ways of living and conform to Christian cultural expectations.

Finney had, in many ways, succeeded in destroying the very meaning of “church”. Worship^{xxxix} was now man-centered and focused primarily on the unbeliever. Preaching, rather than the Lord’s Supper, was the new performance. It was not focused on building up the faithful but in bringing down the unregenerate. Baptisms immediately confirmed and celebrated the decision of the penitent to change his ways rather than being understood as either a sign of God’s covenant or else a person’s true awareness of the work of Christ and the benefits of substitutionary atonement; the Lord’s Supper was thrown open to all or else it was rarely observed.

Most Federalist church buildings readily accommodated such change in priorities^{xl}. Once again, drama was a most significant part of the service and, again, it was something going on down front. The minister was the primary actor, and as such, must carry off the role well. The long rows of lined pews were filled with those who

saw themselves as spectators who came to watch, affirm and be gratified by this week's convicted sinner making his decision against his wicked past life and for his Savior. The altar call was dramatically answered by a new convert's emotional trek down the long, center aisle.

Gothic Revival sans Oxford

Many movements had their origins at Oxford in England, including the that of the Pietists, when the Wesleys began their Holy Club in the 1720s. But the one that is simply labeled by history as "the Oxford Movement" or Tractarianism, rose up one hundred years later. R.W. Church said the movement was to "raise the Church from its lethargy and to strengthen and purify religion, by making it deeper and more real."^{xli} Drummond's explanation is a bit more revealing. "Tractarianism was the result of certain conservative politico-ecclesiastical forces, which sought to preserve the decaying 'Old England' of Church and State from the encroachments of Liberalism." (Drummond, p. 71) In essence, the movement was a cry for a latter-day Anglican counter-reformation along with a desire and attempt to be associated again with the Roman Catholic Church. Innovations advocated by means of the distribution of various tracts spoke of returning worship to its purest, high-church form; and that, of course, would also mean a return to the purest form of architecture that had ever been designed for that style of worship – the Gothic style church.

Builders such as Minard Lafever, ... Richard Upjohn ... James Renwick ... profited by the demand of many Episcopal congregations for "correct" Gothic sanctuaries – the first wave of the Oxford Movement had reached America. ... While the Methodists and Baptists were still

blissfully unconcerned about questions of Worship, the more cultured Non-Liturgical Churches began to look to the Episcopalians for guidance in the planning of both services and places of worship. The first Gothic church in America, of which the Non-Liturgical denominations may be proud, was the Central Congregational Church, Boston, designed by R.M. Upjohn in 13th-century Gothic (1867), one of the first evangelical churches to have a chancel. (Drummond, pp. 90-92)

Some innovations would, indeed, take place within the worship room of such Neo-Gothic buildings but the emphasis was the still the same. The long aisle for clergy processions, the altar standing prominently front and center, and the clergy performing the very essence of worship. A fascination with Gothic architecture returned. The movement spread throughout the world and Neo-Gothic came enthusiastically to the United States.

One of the first gothic churches in America was built by John Henry Hopkins as rector of Trinity Episcopal Church in Pittsburgh, PA. ... Frequent requests for designs led Hopkins to publish his Essay on Gothic Architecture in 1836. (White, p. 130-31)

Following on the heels of the Oxford Movement was the more progressive (or is that aggressive?) Cambridge Movement. This latter group had more direct effect on the progress of the neo-Gothic design.

The Cambridge men were also convinced that the Middle Ages represented the height of Christian piety and worship and concluded that the medieval church buildings should be reproduced. ... It was the entire medieval arrangement re-introduced in complete reversal of the auditory tradition prevalent in the Church of England from the time of Wren. (White, p. 132-33)

The ideas of the Cambridge Movement were effectively promoted in this country by the New York Ecclesiological Society founded in 1848. The first real landmark was Trinity Church, New York City, finished two years earlier by the architect Richard Upjohn. (White, p. 136)

For many in America, neo-Gothic was exciting, even if the form of and approach to worship advocated by British collegiate movements were not. The Neo-Gothic movement - which had much more strength in Europe than in America to restore an actual sacerdotal style of worship to popularity - did nothing to substantially change

the general shape of the worship room or alter the style of worship that was being done. Both Colonial and Neo-Gothic were basilican in concept.

“Colonial” would survive the mid-century coming of the Gothic Revival movement, such as with the Independent Presbyterian Church in Savannah. Neo-Gothic only provided a more majestic and transcendent aura to the interior of the worship room - what many had begun to regard by this time as the “sanctuary” - a return to the “temple” notion that the building and not the people is where God dwells and where He is to be met.

Gothic Revival was also eagerly embraced because of its exterior. Massive stone and towering pinnacles appealed to the public’s admiration of substance and the display of power within a growing civilization.

Gothic identified with city life, taller and taller buildings of business and the wealth they created.

Nothing illustrates this 19th century rise in Gothic architecture more than the post-Finney Broadway Tabernacle. Twenty four years after Finney left the Tabernacle, the congregation that had been first identified with the revivalist movement in architecture, now built a new building three miles



away and square in the Neo-Gothic style. It “[boasted] a cruciform plan with a nave 90 feet long and 70 feet high, with apse, transepts, galleries, and vaulted ceiling ... a veritable cathedral of Congregationalism. ... The theatrelike innovations of the

Chatham Street Chapel and the Broadway Tabernacle ... had been largely ignored.”

(Kilde, p. 56)^{xlii}

Ignored, perhaps, but certainly not forgotten. The original Gothic footprint had been originally created specifically for sacerdotal worship, the grandeur of the Gothic art – with its soaring walls, vaulted ceilings and stained glass had added to the sense of holiness and transcendence simply by its magnificence and excellence in engineering and building expertise. With the coming of the Gothic Revival in America, the outside was eagerly embraced first. But because a sacerdotal style of worship was still to be rejected, the interior was simply “made to work”.

Viewing this paradoxical adoption as an essentially aesthetic phenomenon, architectural and social historians have generally explained Low Church congregations’ interest in High Church buildings by locating it within the growing desire for refinement, education, and taste. As congregations increasingly competed for members, a fashionable building demonstrating the latest trend would, many apparently believed, give the congregation it housed an edge on the competition. (Kilde, p. 58)

Showmanship had not really been ignored, it had been refined.

The apse had been modified to house not a chancel with altar but a pulpit stage with a choir gallery elevated some 20 feet above the main floor and surmounted by the pipes of a large organ. This arrangement of the front-space feature was one of the few legacies of the Broadway Tabernacle and indeed of Finney’s extraordinary experiments in religious architecture. (Kilde, p. 67)

Eventually, neo-Gothic would fall from grace rather quickly. Americans liked the look but wanted very little to do with the implied style of worship that the Oxford Movement had tried to reintroduce.

So, there was almost universal Protestant acceptance of such a stylistic “evolution” and yet the message behind the significance of purpose that Neo-Gothic architecture conveyed and communicated fell flat in the application and practice of

worship among other denominations. In America, Episcopalians and Baptists, Lutherans and Independents would all build their buildings virtually identically. One would need a sign out front to know for sure what kind of congregation any given building housed.

Still, having a stylistic preference before emphasizing a theological distinctive would not go forward without its influence becoming manifested later. Not only was the design of the worship room evolving but the worship going on inside was also changing. The Reformed faith had demanded a worship of a sovereign God that was unpretentious, that involved the entire, gathered people of God to surround the Word, and that was led, rather than dramatized, by a minister who stood among them. But the design most American churches had adopted would work against all those elements. The focus of worship was returning again to holy space, professional actors, and dramatic performance.

Most noticeably, this new focus was seen with the enlargement and appreciation of music in the worship service. The organ not only held fast in its prominent, center-stage position, but the music the organist performed became more and more a contributing factor in the service. More and more instruments are added as well and there is now a demand for the professional musician – the organist, music director, instrumentalists and singers. “What remained from the revival era, however, was a concern for ‘results’, for goal-oriented services. At midcentury, worship goals were two fold, encompassing ‘adoration and praise’ and ‘edification of members in divine love.’”

(Kilde, p. 78)

There were other ways such effects were beginning to show themselves.

To attract converts to worship, services increasingly were led by better-trained clergy, who demanded higher salaries, incorporated more music performed by paid professionals, and featured a host of elaborate accoutrements, including vestments and Communion articles, unknown to earlier generations. (Kilde, p. 87)

By the 1880s, however, the services of evangelical Protestants had changed significantly, ... changes in the service were evident among all evangelical denominations The sermon, ... had shrunk by the close of the century to a mere half hour, and it often addressed social topics quite afield from Scripture. Prayers ... were ... often read from a book. ... Music had become a more prominent part of the service. ... [M]ost evangelical congregations not only listened to stirring organ solos and their own voluntary choir but also heard performances by professional quartets hired for the service. (Kilde, p. 9)

Sacerdotalism was not going to come back in the United States, even with the embrace of the Gothic revival, but the Gothic revival had succeeded in demanding that the American congregation change its worship to become more formal, elegant and as well as being theologically generic.

Architecturally, there was no going back. The new basilican model of such church buildings could be built on a larger and larger scale and bring in more and more people. Its prestige in the growing and expanding suburban areas of the rising middle class could be prominent and secure. The worship room could afford to be more and more grand. The feel, the desire, the draw to approach "church" as sanctuary, as holy space, was, once again, becoming irresistible.

There were other effects that were working virtually simultaneously with these developments, and they would make their own transformation of the worship room. The universal, basilican model among a nation of denominational traditions did not lead to the next step all by itself but it most certainly cleared the way for it. It would go

a very long way in the facilitation of what would be the continuation of the redefining of the essence of “church” itself.

The Rise of the Theatre Church

It was not as though architects and their architectural creations truly led the way of church building design in the 19th century completely unhindered from theological priorities; it was more the case that architectural evolution/innovation and theological/social transformation had become happy but independent roommates. On the one hand, the Industrial Revolution gave rise to an era of cultural prosperity, innovation and materialism. All architecture of the later 19th century demonstrated this – this was the age of the skyscraper, the professional ball park, the “soup-to-nuts” factory complex, cabled-bridges and palatial museums and centers for the arts. Christians wanting to build new church buildings saw no reason to resist emulating and joining this, no reason to hold back or be different.

On the other hand, the religion of the United States kept transforming and was becoming more and more cultural. Finney’s Awakening died down after the War Between the States and revivalism was being transformed into worship as an expression of a developed Christian culture, of refinement, comfort and style. Spirituality was being relegated to the kind of topics one does not usually share or discuss in public, such as one’s politics or choices in the stock market. Whether one accepts the notion of a Third Great Awakening or not, the rise of Pietism, of an individualized faith, grew to

be much more important than the doctrinal, historical distinctions that had once separated denominations.

On the one hand, such denominational differences were fast becoming more generally perceived as nothing more than “mascots” identifying cross-town rivalries, as with high school sports teams. The movement now was toward commonality and the sharing of a common Christian belief and vision. On the other hand, to counter the growing theological liberalism coming from Germany, many Christians began to be enamored with the new teaching of Dispensationalism which was able to cross denominational lines with ease, even able to virtually replace, in many cases, traditional theological distinctions with a brand new form of Christianity – Adventist Premillennialism. Meanwhile, social activism was also on the rise – slavery was the prominent issue before the war, but afterward, it pertained to anything that magnified the duty and responsibility of the “haves” toward the “have nots”. The social gospel was being born and this had a strong influence in quenching any advocacy for orthodox integrity.

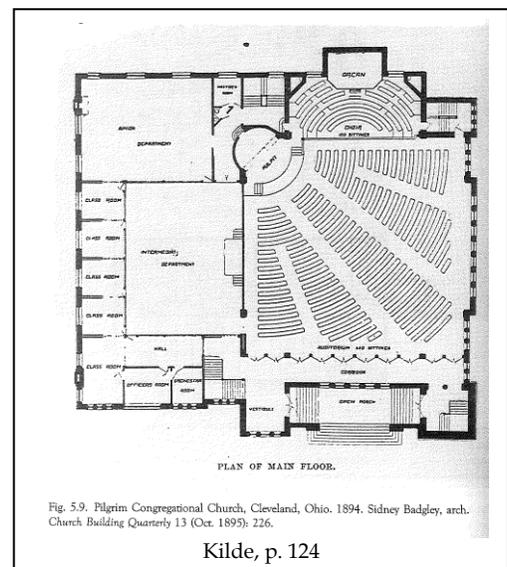
The result of both influences was a boom in the construction of grander and grander houses of worship.

As urban congregations across the United States wrestled with rearticulating their private and public missions within the new economic, social, and geographic contexts, they also were faced with a much broader array of stylistic choices for the architectural facades of their new churches. Unlike the midcentury adoption of Gothic architecture for evangelical Protestant churches, which had combined theological and social motives, by the 1870s materialistic motivations eclipsed concern for the character of Christianity as churches adapted more fully to the growing consumer-oriented industrial culture. While clerical analyses or interpretations of architectural style had never been abundant in denominational literature, by the latter decades of the nineteenth century they had disappeared almost entirely, and design decisions during the postwar period rested predominantly with professional architects, who viewed church

architecture in the same light as public, commercial buildings that celebrated the industrial and commercial progress of the United States. (Kilde, p. 101)

What came next demonstrated one more, prime ingredient that Finney's Broadway Tabernacle had contributed as an important key to the future design of worship rooms. "The Broadway Tabernacle surpassed the chapel in facilitating performance and audience reception by drawing upon the prototype of all theatrical spaces, the classical amphitheatre." (Kilde, p. 43)

The traditional, Reformed, and therefore Protestant, positioning of the pulpit in the worship room had not only been front and center but also raised above the congregation, which had a symbolic way of lifting up the authority of the Word. (Some, such as Jeanne Kilde, argue simply for this being a demonstration of the authority or "power" of the minister, himself, but that misses the point^{xliiii}.) In other words, this was a theological determination. The raising of the pulpit also had the practical aspect of allowing all in the room to hear, particularly as the earlier meeting rooms had expanded with galleries. Since ancient Greece, the amphitheatre had also proved to work very well when these elements were reversed. The stage of the amphitheatre was the at the lowest point while the audience was raised and ranked ever higher. The audience sat in a semi-circle arrangement around the stage so all could not only hear - under the theory that sound travels more easily up than down - but also comfortably see.



Religious and secular authority had been marked by this physical elevation for centuries. ... The amphitheatre, in contrast, inverts this arrangement, lowering the authority figure and placing the audience in an expanding circle above that individual. ... [S]ound naturally carries upward. Thus, it is far more effective to speak to a crowd of people from below rather than from above because many more individuals can hear the voice. (Kilde, p. 18)

Jeanne Kilde presses the point that a different sense of power is also at work here – that the church readily adapted this new design because it was becoming more and more democratic in nature. In a meeting house with a raised pulpit, the power is commanded by the one preaching; while in an amphitheatre, a sense of power (approval/disapproval) is given to the audience in their regard for the one on the stage. The only power (persuasion/entertainment) the actor possesses and maintains is in the command of his performance upon his audience^{xliv}. Kilde argues that this style of worship room suited the American palette in the 19th century with its psychological appeal to democracy and balance of power, even with a sense of checks and balances^{xlv}.

In such an amphitheatre design, the size of the audience/congregation could also be greatly expanded. We are still in the age before the common projection of the voice through electronic amplification, and the amphitheatre design, as ancient as Greece and Rome itself, was utilized primarily to accommodate so many people in the service at one time.

The situation of Pilgrim Congregational Church in the Tremont neighborhood of Cleveland provides an instructive example. Organized in 1859, the congregation worshiped in a cruciform Gothic Revival church seating about 600. The space was far from satisfactory, however. The sound of the minister's voice rose straight up to the timbered roof and stayed there, leaving congregants in the back pews straining to hear the sermon. To make matters worse, worshipers seated in the back of the church could barely see the minister, their vision hindered by distance. ... Moreover, the congregation itself was growing, ... In 1894 they solved their problems, dedicating a new state-of-the-art auditorium church. (Kilde, p. 115)

Perhaps because the amphitheatre plan was so new to U.S. architects, they experimented with it quite freely, producing several distinct variations, some of which became widely popular. The

inclined floor and curved pews of the amphitheatre were fitted into an amazing variety of spatial plans, from oblong to wedgelike to round to polygonal. (Kilde, p. 118)

In the [multi-level] pulpit stage arrangement, the lower level housed the pulpit, which could be an elaborate desk dominating the center of the stage or a modest lectern or pulpit rail. Above and behind it rose a bank of choir seating.... Communion table and font were often placed below the pulpit on the main floor, although in some cases, the lectern was shifted to the side of the stage for Communion services and the table, retrieved from a back room, was placed in the center. (Kilde, p. 121)

The most prominent element accommodated by the evangelical pulpit stage, however, was the organ. (Kilde, p. 123)

To further enhance the experience, architects built in more and more theatre-like characteristics and less architectural aspects that actually pointed to the purpose of the building. There were more and more elaborate proscenium arches, marquis and gas jet chandelier lighting, individual flip-up opera seats, opera boxes, and rear control booths.

Once again, function followed form. The worship services in such grand houses had to rise to meet the expectations that the facilities seemed to require. Excellent preaching and excellent music were the two drawing cards by which such churches were known and the need for performance dominated the public opinion and demand of both. When the congregation was called upon to participate, even the voices of the laity were to be augmented and encouraged to improve. "New hymnals included three- and four-part harmonies, indicating not only that congregants were expected to read music but that they were sufficiently skilled vocally to carry distinctive parts." (Kilde, p. 136) Making a joyful noise now required cultural sophistication. The common order of worship that developed and was made traditional during this period included a musical introit/call to worship, three hymns, anthem, prayer, responsive readings, sermon, offering, doxology and closing musical postlude. "Protestants could

feel equally at ease within a Baptist, Methodist, Congregational, or Presbyterian auditorium. In fact, architects regularly used the same plans interchangeably for churches of these denominations.” (Kilde, p. 144)

A Crisis of Identity

The beginning of the twentieth century saw the rise of Fundamentalism – a stand that conservative Christians took in defending the gospel message in the face of the rising tide of evolution and unbelief within the mainstream church. When Fundamentalism turned militant – it pushed its moral crusade upon the American culture and preached fear of rising nationalist enemies. The United States entered into war against Germany and called for Prohibition. The War to end all Wars brought discouragement, Al Capone brought organized crime, and the Roaring Twenties brought a rising defiance against the institutional religious authorities and the watered-down moralisms that the American church had come to represent.

The upscale, socialite theatre church died out quickly as materialism and hedonism in the United States were on the rise. “[I]f religious congregations, passive in their seats, simply watched worship performances, what need was there for church at all?” (Kilde, p. 200) Theology had all but completely lost its way. Fundamentalism was retreating into a fortress mentality with a haughty disdain for the wicked in the world. The Scopes Trial in Dayton, Tennessee had been a small victory in the courtroom but a dreadful defeat in the national media. The century known for the Modernist Controversy, particularly among Presbyterians, had likewise caught national attention;

but efforts and cries for a modern-day Reformation in the 1930s had left only paltry results. Theological liberalism was spreading readily and it was not looking back.

Church architecture, as well, had lost all sense of vision. In the 19th century, the roommates had, at least, gotten along; but now they hardly spoke. In the 19th century, there had been a tension between the architect and the pastor as to which would actually take the lead in designing and building an appropriate worship room; now there were simply other voices to which to listen.

With the advent of modern methods of travel and communication, all the riches of the world seemed to lie open to 19th-century architects. Eclecticism is not one particular style, but rather an approach to architecture that consciously draws from the riches of all times and places. Different styles were often valued for their particular associations, perceived honesty of construction, because they hearkened back to a better time, or for simply providing something new in the architectural market. (McNamara, p. 48)

The truth is, the architect needed the pastor more than he had been willing to admit. But now, it was the pastor who had no vision, no vested theological interest. As a result, the architect, rather than running wild, floundered for direction.^{xlvi}

The notion of creating a worship space to honor or celebrate or even to take pride in one's religion was fast changing. Now there was a completely opposite question: how do we build worship structures that will bring people back? What will make them take interest in worship again? The answer that seemed to resonate the easiest was: revisit what has worked before.

So, Christianity in the early twentieth century began with yet another Gothic Revival, this one now referred to as "the late Gothic Revival" in America. "We will make the church look like a church again." It seemed to be an attempt to shun the democratic atmosphere of the theatre-church and to call America back to having an

austere appreciation, if not respect, for the worship of God. One of the first of this movement was the Central Congregational Church in Providence, RI, which was patterned after Trinity Episcopal in Boston^{xlvii}. It was described in negative terms: gone were the accoutrements, the decorations, the flatterings of the concert hall. The pews were straight and in rows and not having the appearance of opera-house seating. This was to be “a sanctuary and nothing else.” The front was telling: a divided chancel surrounded the large Communion table which stood in the apse underneath the cross. “These formalized spaces emphasized the role of clergy not as preachers, but as priests, officiating over the worship of the divine being.” The design soon spread rapidly through all the Protestant denominations – Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, etc. - in the United States^{xlviii}.

The vast majority of these Gothic Revival churches abandoned both the auditorium seating plans and the pulpit platforms of the earlier evangelical churches. In these longitudinally oriented naves, often featuring vaulting supported by columns, rectilinear pews were divided in the center, processional aisle. A divided chancel typically occupied the east end of the room, which terminated, in many instances, in an apse.” (Kilde, p. 207)

Without a reason not to, bringing the Gothic design to its fullest expression just seemed to be the right thing to do.

Critics and architects alike championed the liturgically facilitative “split chancel” as the most desirable arrangement. As explained at midcentury by Richard H. Ritter, the split chancel balanced the four primary symbolic representations of God’s revelation held by Protestants: the Bible, the table, the pulpit, and the cross. (Kilde, p. 209)

In the last one hundred years two types of liturgical arrangements have come to dominate Protestant church building to the point of becoming standard patterns. ... One of the dominant types is the concert stage arrangement ... The other type is the so-called divided chancel ... It is interesting that these two types have come to have such a widespread usage in contemporary Protestantism that it is often impossible to tell the denomination for which a building is intended simply by looking at the interior. In itself this is an indication of indifference to strong denominational traditions in worship. (White, p. 118)

Existing buildings, such as the First Presbyterian Church in Knoxville, TN, removed the pulpit platform, choir, organ pipes, and proscenium, and installed, instead, a divided chancel^{xlix}. Straight row pews replaced curved ones, stained glass was newly installed, Communion rails and kneeling pads returned, and processions began the new, Protestant liturgies.

Among others, the next architectural move was back to Revivalism. Following the expansion of Finney's "new measures" in the early 19th century, D.L. Moody became famous after the Civil War, for his audiences of thousands and tens of thousands. The Moody Church, built in Chicago, built twenty six years after his death, was simply Finney's Broadway Tabernacle writ large^l.



Moody Church, Chicago
mini-angels.blogspot.com

In point of fact, "large" seemed to be the single, controlling and guiding factor in design innovation in the twentieth century. Microphone amplification had finally arrived which, at last, brought the weakest factor - the preacher's voice - up to speed along with the sound of the immense organ, the advances in construction engineering that allowed for larger and larger halls with less and less obstruction, and the growing desire of many Christians to show the world that they were not obsolete or soon going away. "Large" is what brought back the third architectural experiment - the theatre church.

The example here is the Boston Avenue Methodist Church, in Tulsa, OK, built in 1929. With a fantastic, innovative exterior that pushed Gothic into the modern age, the revisitation of the theatre style brought back the individual, semicircular seating, the wrap-around gallery and luxurious ceiling design. Nevertheless the room has the more utilitarian look of the twentieth century. The seats are not padded, the wood paneling not so elaborate. The pulpit platform almost looked pressed up against the back wall and the communion rail runs the full length of the front.

The reasons for these things are plain. First, the cost for church building construction begins to climb rapidly in the twentieth century, while manufacturing offers more and more items pre-

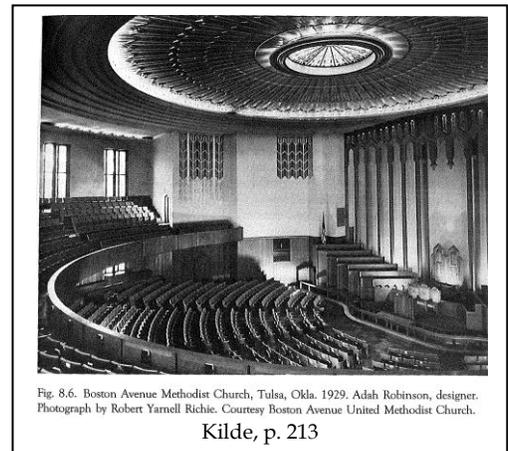


Fig. 8.6. Boston Avenue Methodist Church, Tulsa, Okla. 1929. Adah Robinson, designer. Photograph by Robert Yarnell Richie. Courtesy Boston Avenue United Methodist Church. Kilde, p. 213

made and were offered less expensively. Smaller congregations, particularly, are building their churches with more and more commercially generic plans. All across the United States pulpits, pulpit chairs and communion tables, pews, stained glass, windows and doors, all begin to resemble each other with little distinctiveness at all because they are all pre-made in factories and available in catalogs. Second, even with bigger congregations, where the luxury of choice and detail still remain, decisions regarding capacity become more and more a headache. Build too small and you limit potential growth and congregational prosperity. Build too big and the numbers become unmanageable in terms of actually performing the worship service. Something will

have to give, and that something is to reconsider what has become that all-controlling roommate, architecture.

Pastor Rick Warren, of Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California, expressed the view that has become predominant in the latter half of the twentieth century, saying, to the effect, that “architecture means nothing”. This is the era of the mega-church or arena-church, which mimics, more than anything else, the designs of sports facilities and their efforts to seat more and more numbers in the same venue for the same event. It grew out of the vision of drawing middle-class adults back to church and was specifically designed in terms of what was not important rather than what was. “It would be an institution marked by its familiarity, not its distinctiveness.” (Kilde, p. 216) Symbolism of any kind was removed, liturgy was reduced and relaxed, entertainment in terms of musical and stage performance were center stage and messages were nonthreatening and practical.

Accommodating larger and larger crowds is considered the prime asset to this style of church. There is anonymity and noncommitment. Professional musicians take center stage and “lead” the singing with their own polished performances. What allows the audience to “stay connected” in such venues is the utilization of the same technology one would see in a Broadway show or media event. Professional lighting, sound control, larger than life video screens project the images so that being in the audience is much like watching television at home or the replay at a basketball game.

Smaller church congregations have followed this suit readily. Even though the sense of anonymity cannot be assured, notions such as “community” and “fellowship”

are purposely replaced with nonthreatening references to “relational ministry”. The stage is devoid of pulpit, font or table, the equipment and trappings of the musical band fill the stage and most of the service is given to their leadership. Upon the big screen is projected first the words to the songs, then the Scriptures, and then the face of the speaker after he finally makes his way through the equipment and sits easily on a stool in jeans and an open-collar shirt.

What is clearly being expressed is the importance of the worshipper himself much more than the God. The individual is much more important than community; and identifying with culture is much more important than calling to culture. Once again, worship has turned into a spectator sport, complete in many large venues with all the vendor services on the side. The professionals on stage do their thing. The only thing lacking is that sense of pilgrimage. No one is “going” anywhere. Now is all that matters. The sense of experience is now all-important.

ⁱ “In the early years of dissent hundreds of ordinary men and women willingly suffered imprisonment, deprivation of living, torture and death for one great principle. That principle was freedom of conscience; the right for any man to know God and to act upon His commands without recourse to interpreters. Freedom of conscience has always been the central theme of nonconformity and it is to the witness and the sufferings of the early nonconformists that we owe much of what we now mean by freedom and which underlies our concept of democracy.” (Lindley, p. 12)

ⁱⁱ John Bunyan, author of *Pilgrim’s Progress*, is one of the most famous of the nonconformists, being imprisoned for his faith for twelve years. Bunyan is buried in Bunhill Fields, London, an entire cemetery dedicated to the faithful ministers and followers of conscience. (rf. *Bunhill Fields*, Alfred W. Light, Stoke-On-Kent: Tentmaker Publications, 2003.)

ⁱⁱⁱ Charles II embraced Roman Catholicism on his deathbed and many Protestants feared his son, James II, would impose Roman Catholicism on England. “Once more many Englishmen were beginning to yearn for an uncompromised Protestant faith free from the duplicities of government control.” (Old, vol. 5, p. 27)

^{iv} “The builders of the chapels meant them to be aggressive, for they were the new militant symbols about attitudes to God. The village church was architecturally irregular and Gothic; chapels must therefore be foreshare and classical. Churches had weathered stonework and fanciful tracery; chapels must have

careful joining between the bricks or stones, clean-cut corners and simple windows, square or circular-headed, whether they were build in a simple, Quaker, farmhouse-kitchen manner or in a grand style with showy Greek and Roman motifs." (Lindley, p. 9).

^v The most notorious symbol to be rejected was that of the steeple. "The scarcity of anything approaching a steeple in the earliest chapel buildings is made all the more obvious by the occasional exception such as the delightful cupola which surmounts the eighteenth-century Unitarian chapel in Wakefield, Yorkshire." (Lindley, p. 14)

^{vi} "It was only at the time of the Methodist Revival that the familiar term 'chapel' became generally used to denote what had previously been known as a 'meeting house.' The change was not happy. 'Meeting-house' suggests an unpretentious Puritan place of worship. ... 'chapel' is nondescript. ... Methodist 'chapels' were originally built as preaching-houses subsidiary to the 'churches' of the Establishment, where the Sacraments were administered; ... The unecclesiastical origin of Methodism, its rapid and centralized development with limited financial resources, and the fact that its adherents came from the working people rather than from the comfortable tradesmen and merchants of the 'Old Dissent,' accounts for the dismal standardized chapel of brick or stucco. This type sprang up mushroom-like during the first half of the 19th century, particularly in new industrial centres. By this time the industrial Revolution had broken down the good traditions of Georgian craftsmanship, and by the middle of the 19th century commercialized 'builder's Gothic' completed the transition from honest simplicity to sheer vulgarity." (Drummond, p. 44-46)

^{vii} There were also chapels constructed and used by Anglicans in smaller towns. One surviving example is Church of the Holy Trinity, Berwick-on-Tweed, Northumberland. The altar is fixed against one short wall and the pulpit is attached to one of the piers to the side.

^{viii} "By June 1670 there were so many meeting houses that even Christopher Wren was called upon to get them pulled down. The order referred to places fitted for meetings 'under pretence of religious worship.' Wren was to 'cause to be pulled down and secured in safe placed, all pulpits, benches, and other seats, he shall find in any of the houses aforesaid for the convenience of the conventicles.' (Quoted in Waddington, *Surrey Congregational history*, p. 63) A particular instance was at Bermondsey, Surrey, where on July 22, 1670, Wren was ordered 'to pull down the barn called the Jamaica Barn.' (*Ibid*, p. 64)" (Donnelly, p. 85)

^{ix} Donnelly, p. 7

^x Donnelly, p. 10

^{xi} "It is the Puritan meeting-house to the last nail and shingle. Gaunt and bare, it 'lieth four square' to its God and to the sea. Its framing trim and nautical, and the utter absence of the softer amenities of architecture, bear out the tradition that its builders were sea-faring as well as God-fearing." (Tallmadge, p. 43)

^{xii} "The congregation was Congregational with Presbyterian influence, and it was to become Unitarian." (Rose, p. 204)

^{xiii} "This Congregational church was involved from the first in the Unitarian movement that swept New England after the Revolution." (Rose, p. 205)

^{xiv} Unitarianism began much earlier, of course, in Europe as early as the 16th century. What factors actually led to the embracing of Unitarianism at Old Ship remain unknown to this author.

^{xv} "If the communion table in New England had an early definite location, this is not evident from the documents," (Donnelly, p. 92.

^{xvi} In many meeting houses, the name of this table is "deacon's desk" which was used for both religious and civic services.

^{xvii} Archeological studies have been done from ruins of the fifth church in Jamestown (1647, the second Bruton parish Church, Williamsburg (1683), and St. Luke's, Smithfield, VA (early 1630s). (White, p. 99)

^{xviii} St. David's in Cheraw, S.C. was the last to be built in that state under King George III in 1770.

^{xix} White tends to dismiss early Anglican efforts in America. "From what little we know of the first few generations of Anglicans in America we can say that they were not particularly venturesome in their church architecture." (White, p. 99)

^{xx} There was another “Old North” in Boston. Originally, it was a Congregationalist church, started in 1649 and its first building was of a meeting house style, once pastored by both Increase and Cotton Mather, and later, Samuel Mather. But in 1802, this congregation also became Unitarian.

^{xxi} Longfellow actually stood in a rebuilt spire that only stood 195 feet in the air. The original had blown down in 1804. Today, a third spire stands, replacing the one Longfellow climbed, which also blew down in a storm in 1954.

^{xxii} “The first period of American Architecture, which may be termed “The Age of Memory,” was succeeded by an “Age of Books” (the 18th century), for there was as yet no architect in the land, and American builders were dependent on such manuals as Gibbs’ *Book of Architecture*, Salmond’s *Palladio Londiniensis*, etc.” (Drummond, p. 52)

^{xxiii} White suggests the earlier meeting-house style of American Anglican churches indicates a strong conservatism that was lost when Wren’s influence arrived in the 18th c. (White, p. 99-100)

^{xxiv} “American manuals such as Asher Benjamin’s *Country Builder’s Assistant* [1792] helped to universalize a natural good taste. A generation before this widely circulated book was published a high tradition of craftsmanship had been established in the American Colonies; the churches, like the smaller parish churches of the Middle Ages, were built by plain men who had inherited a natural aptitude for the work.” (Drummond, p. 54)

^{xxv} Apparently, it was worse than that. Finney later writes: “Unexpectedly to myself they asked me if I received the Confession of faith of the Presbyterian church. I had not examined it; - that is, the large work, containing the Catechisms and Presbyterian Confession. This had made no part of my study. I replied that I received it for substance of doctrine, so far as I understood it. But I spoke in a way that plainly implied, I think, that I did not pretend to know much about it.” (Rosell, pp. 53-54)

^{xxvi} “Some theologians have held that regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit alone ... But I might just as lawfully insist that it is the work of man alone.” (Finney, *Systematic Theology*, p. 224) “There is nothing in religion beyond the ordinary powers of nature. It consists entirely in the *right exercise* of the powers of nature. It is just that, and nothing else. When mankind become religious, they are not *enabled* to put forth exertions which they were unable before to put forth. They only exert powers which they had before, in a different way, and use them for the glory of God.” (Finney, *Revivals*, p. 4) “Ministers are charged with preaching heresy, because they presume to teach that faith is an exercise, and not a principle; and that sin is an act, and not a part of the constitution of man.” (Finney, *Revivals*, p. 426)

^{xxvii} “The most common definition of wisdom is, that it is the choice of the best end and the selection of the most appropriate means for the accomplishment of that end. (Prov. 11:30) (Finney, *Revivals*, p. 173) “Ministers ought to know what measures are best calculated to aid in accomplishing the great end of their office, the salvation of souls. Some measures are plainly necessary. By measures, I mean the things which should be done to secure the attention of the people, and bring them to listen to the truth. (Finney, *Revivals*, p. 201)

^{xxviii} or Chatham Street Chapel.

^{xxix} “[P]erhaps for the first time in U.S. religious architecture, the preacher was ... given the physical performance space that a secular orator commanded. ... [T]he visual link to a higher authority was severed, the preacher now had access to the performative authority of the actor.” (Kilde, p. 34)

^{xxx} J. H. Kilde argues persuasively for the psychological dynamic of authority being played with and inverted between that of the minister and the congregation/audience.

^{xxxi} “It is interesting to trace the shrinking of the pulpit and the expanding of the pulpit platform upon which it stood as revivalistic preaching spread.” (White, p. 124)

^{xxxii} One positive point to this which needs to be stressed is made by Kilde here: “[T]he curvilinear seating allowed audience members to view one another from across the room, ... these identity-facilitating features composed a constant reminder of shared purpose and shared commitment.” (Kilde, p. 44)

^{xxxiii} “Architecturally, the Broadway Tabernacle was similar to eighteenth-century German and French developments in theatre design.” (Kilde, p. 43)

^{xxxiv} Finney was not the first to utilize a choir in the support of worship, and the organ had already been a bone of contention for over a hundred years. But no one had yet seen the benefits of portraying them as prominently as Finney had.

^{xxxv} Kilde, p. 46.

^{xxxvi} Finney had spent ten years in the evangelistic revival ministry, followed by a professorship and then presidency of Oberlin College in Oberlin, OH. There, with virtually no theological training of his own, Finney wrote a systematic theology and published, among others, his lectures on revivalism.

^{xxxvii} "To engage ever-larger audiences in the spiritual message of salvation and to encourage their participation in revival meetings, ... revivalists broadened their strategies to transform Protestant services through ritual practices called "New Measures." (Kilde, p. 22)

^{xxxviii} "Julius Melton, in his *Presbyterian Worship in America: Changing Patterns Since 1787*, traced the effects of revivalism on religious traditions in America that had antedated revivalism. In such communions (such as the Presbyterian), worship had previously been understood as a meeting between God and his visible people. Worship was a dialogue, if you will: God speaking through the Word and sacrament, and his people responding in prayer, praise, and confession. The decisions that governed such worship revolved around this dialogical conception of worship as a meeting between God and his people. According to Melton, revivalist meetings were quite different. While there might still be some elements in common with a worship meeting, a revivalist meeting was deliberately designed to attract the nonreligious, the unchurched, to a meeting where they would be challenged to consider embracing faith in Christ." (Gordon, p. 150)

^{xxxix} Our present forms of public worship, and everything so far as *measures* are concerned, have been arrived at by *degrees*, and by a *succession of New Measures*. (Finney, *Revivals*, p. 282) The fact is that God has established, in no Church, any particular form, or manner of worship, for promoting the interests of religion. The Scriptures are entirely silent on these subjects, under the Gospel dispensation, and the Church is left to exercise her own discretion in relation to all such matters." (Finney, *Revivals*, p. 313)

^{xl} "It was during these revivals, specifically those of Charles Grandison Finney in New York City, that religious space became significantly influenced by theatre space, perhaps for the first time in history." (Kilde, p. 20)

^{xli} Atherstone, p. 98.

^{xlii} In 1903-05, the congregation built yet another, even more elaborate Neo-Gothic building which included a ten-story tower over the crossing of nave and transepts below.

^{xliii} "Why has preaching been so important in Protestantism? Primarily because most Protestants see preaching as dependent upon the power of God. It is not intended to be an inspiring talk or even an exciting challenge to action presented by the minister on his own authority. Preaching in Protestantism has been seen as a means by which the power of God is made present in the midst of His people. God's acts on the behalf of His people are recalled and again made present by their saving power. Thus, though preaching deals with events past, it is never remote in time for the power of God is present in the recital of these events. In the recital of these actions God is acting in our midst, the preacher being his agent." (White, p. 35-36)

^{xliv} One interesting historical note surrounds the construction of the Oberlin meetinghouse which was constructed on the campus of Oberlin College after Finney's arrival. Surviving plans reveal an interest in pushing the amphitheatre design even farther than had been done at Broadway Tabernacle but the final product was much more conservative, even retreating to a more traditional meetinghouse layout complete with a return to the raised pulpit. It is surmised that this notion of power, which was so democratically popular in New York City, was not to be encouraged on a mid-western campus where professors taught students.

^{xlv} It could also explain why the church as theatre did not really take off in popularity in Anglican England during the same period. There were exceptions, such as St. George's Church, Tupnell Park, Holloway, London, built in 1867. Ironically, when that church closed, it was readily turned into a theatre! But if Kilde is right, we are left virtually without explanation as to why the next popular uprising in

church building design caused by the Neo-Gothic movement in England also became so popular in the U.S.

^{xlvi} “Few groups would knowingly build a church which flouted their beliefs, yet many, through ignorance, have done this. Obviously many have been speaking in an unfamiliar tongue here, and unblushingly and unknowingly have erred in their grammar.” (White, p. 46)

^{xlvii} Kilde, p. 204

^{xlviii} There were efforts of some sort to tie in the late Gothic Revival designs with some theological legitimacy. When the Andrew-Riverside Presbyterian Church in Minneapolis was built, it was “reputed to echo sixteenth-century Presbyterian divine John Knox’s St. Giles Church in Edinburgh” (Kilde, p. 206) But of course St. Giles was built prior to the Reformation and went through several modifications by Reformers in the early days to make the building work.

^{xlix} Kilde, p. 209

¹ Moody Church, constructed in 1925, can seat close to 4,000. It’s predecessor, the Chicago Avenue Church, could seat 10,000.